



April 13, 2023

Dear Council President Glass and Councilmembers,

My name is Manny Hidalgo, and I am a District 6 resident and Executive Director of Shepherd's Table, a social services organization focused on providing food and other vital resources to the community in Silver Spring and beyond. At Shepherd's Table, our mission is to improve quality of life, create a pathway towards self-sufficiency and inspire hope for the most vulnerable experiencing food insecurity, homelessness, and poverty. At Shepherd's Table, our guests are not only meal guests, but also my neighbors who deserve access to safe, stable, affordable housing, nutritious and affordable food, and quality behavioral health care.

To end homelessness by 2025, there are some essential programs that need increased funding to expand services rather than simply maintaining current levels of programming. These include **Permanent Supportive Housing**, the **Housing Initiative Program**, and the **Rapid Rehousing Program**, all vital programs that are necessary for transitioning people into stable and supportive housing. At Progress Place, I see firsthand the multitude of positive effects that Permanent Supportive Housing has on a client's wellbeing and believe that model should be invested in.

We should also combat the affordable housing crisis so that no one ever needs to use homeless services. We believe that homelessness is a housing problem, so investing more in **affordable housing** for renters at 0%-50% Area Median Income is a vital prevention measure. I also support the increased funding for **Emergency Rental Assistance** as a safety net for households so that they never have to face the trauma of eviction.

Additionally, the council should support increased funding for the **Crisis Center** so that it can be staffed 24/7 for all Mobile Crisis teams in Rockville, Germantown and Silver Spring. Complex behavioral health emergencies always require trained behavioral health experts county-wide. At Progress Place we have experienced wait times of upwards of 6 hours because of the lack of staffing, and while the work they do is extremely necessary, it must be more accessible in order for it to make a difference in our community.

I would like to thank the County Council for the opportunity to testify and urge them to prioritize the fight to end poverty in our county for every single neighbor.

Sincerely,

Manny Hidalgo
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